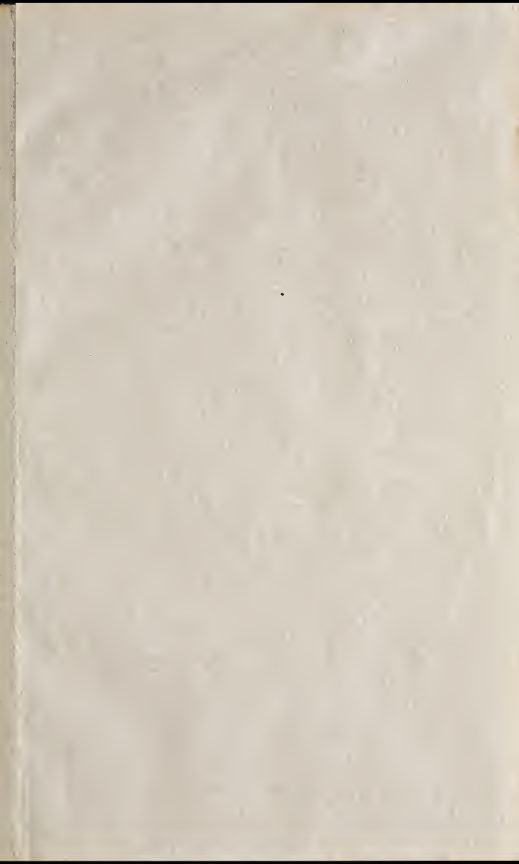


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Adams's (40)

REPORT

OF

THE COMMITTEE

OF

COMMERCE AND MANUFACTURES,

WHO WERE INSTRUCTED,

BY A RESOLUTION OF THIS HOUSE,

OF THE 18th ULT.

“ TO ENQUIRE

INTO THE

EXPEDIENCY OF AUTHORISING

THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TO EMPLOY PERSONS

TO EXPLORE SUCH PARTS OF THE PROVINCE

OF

LOUISIANA,

AS HE MAY DEEM PROPER.”

8th MARCH, 1804.

*Read, and ordered to be committed to a committee of the
whole House, on Wednesday next.*

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REPORT.

Report of the committee of Commerce and Manufactures, on the resolve of the house of representatives, directing them to enquire into the expediency of authorising the President of the United States to cause certain remote and unknown parts of Louisiana to be explored.

BY a series of memorable events the United States have lately acquired a large addition of soil and jurisdiction. This is believed, besides the tracts on the east side of the Mississippi, to include all the country which lies to the westward between that river and the great chain of mountains that stretch from north to south, and divide the waters running into the Atlantic from those which empty into the Pacific Ocean; and beyond that chain between the territories claimed by Great Britain on the one side, and by Spain on the other quite to the South Sea.

It is highly desireable that this extensive region should be visited, in some parts at least, by intelligent men. Important additions might thereby be made to the science of geography. Various materials might thence be derived to augment our knowledge of natural history. The government would thence acquire correct information of the situation, extent

and worth of its own dominions, and individuals of research and curiosity would receive ample gratification as to the works of art and productions of nature which exist in those boundless tracts.

There is no need of informing the house that already an expedition authorised by congress at the second session of the seventh congress, has been actually undertaken and is going on under the President's direction, up the Missouri. The two enterprising conductors of this adventure, captains Lewis and Clark, have been directed to attempt a passage to the western shore of the South Sea ; from them on their return in 1805, a narrative full of instruction may be expected. It is also understood that a survey has been ordered to be made of the Mississippi, from the mouth of the Ohio, to the falls of Saint Anthony. Of this a correct map may be expected within a reasonable time. The like also is hoped, in the course of a moderate period, from the latter place to the source of the Mississippi, and thence to the Lake of the Woods.

Men of political research have, in like manner, long known that the course of the Mississippi downwards to the Gulf of Mexico, has been well delineated by captain Hutchings ; and that more recently, by the assiduous observations of Mr. Elliott, the turnings and windings of that river, southward of its junction with the Ohio, and the territorial line on the 31st degree of north latitude, to the north western angle of Florida, have been exhibited in a perspicuous and scientific manner. Along the coast of the ocean too, from Perdido bay to the bay of Saint Bernard, navigators have viewed the shores and coast so often, that there is little left to explore.

But although there is so much really known, or in a train of investigation, concerning Louisiana,

there are still some parts upon which it would be desirable to possess additional information. The tracts alluded to are those which remain principally in their original obscurity, and strongly attract the eye of the adventurer. Their pathless forests may be advantageously penetrated along the channels of the *Arkansas* and the *Red River*, two of those large and long water courses which intersect them. An expedition of discovery up these prodigious streams and their branches, might redound as much to the honor, and more to the interest of our government, than the voyages by sea round the terraqueous globe have done for the polished nations of Europe who authorised them. Such liberal enterprizes will befit the present season of prosperity, and may be expected to succeed best during the reign of peace.

The *Red River* was visited many years ago, and even settled as high as *Nachitoches*. This old establishment is laid down in some of the maps, as being only seven leagues distant from the station of *Adais*, the capital of the province of *Texas*, and situated on the river *Mexicano*. *Red River* is described as difficult to ascend when the waters are low; but when high, a traveller may, by means of them, penetrate where he pleases. More than half a century ago, it was said, that along its banks were many inferior lakes, and drowned lands, that abounded with alligators and fishes; that its shores were inhabited by plenty of bisons, bears, tigers, wolves, deer, and several other species of untamed beasts; as well as by turkies, geese, swans, ducks, and other kinds of wild fowl; and that all manner of indigerous fruit trees and grape vines sprout up luxuriantly from the soil. To these accounts, which are common to most other parts of the American wilderness when first visited by civilized men, other facts and considerations are now to be added—the nation has been lately told, on respectable authority, that

the Red River is navigable by boats one thousand miles beyond Nachitoches. It is reported to run through a country abounding in rich prairies, where neat cattle and horses range in innumerable herds as independent as the natural inhabitants. There is reason to presume the head of this stream lies concealed in the south western corner of the newly ceded territory. The limits of Louisiana, in that quarter, are obscure and undefined. And it is worthy of legislative consideration, whether the latitude and longitude of the Red River source ought not to be ascertained under the authority of the nation. It may be expected that individuals will venture upon such undertakings for the gratification of their own speculative curiosity, and by discreet management, the journies of such persons to minister to the national wants, and to general instruction, with but a trifling appropriation from the treasury.

The Arkansas which has been already traced above one thousand miles, also seems worthy of being explored with more care and to a greater extent than has hitherto been done. A spacious plain and valley incrustated annually, (like the soil in some spots about the Persian Gulf,) with native salt, in quantity sufficient to impregnate a branch of the Arkansas, and occasionally the river into which it falls, with its briny quality, and to make it a SALT RIVER down to the settlement of Ouisarque, for considerably more than six hundred miles of its course, might be mentioned as no ordinary occurrences. The masses of VIRGIN SILVER and gold that glitter in the veins of the rocks which underlay the Arkansas itself, and mingle with the minerals near certain other of its streams, and offer themselves to the hand of him who will gather, refine and convert them to use, are no less uncommon and wonderful. These extraordinary productions might be dwelt upon to considerable length, in this report; but

























